

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

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Church Union

"Conversations Between the Church of England and the Methodist Church:
a Report . . ." (Church Information Office and Epworth Press, 1963, 3/-).

THIS Report is the outcome of over six years' meetings between representatives of the two Churches—twelve from each body, each including one woman. We have read the Report with deep interest, together with newspaper and other comments upon it, and correspondence arising from its proposals. We propose here to give a resumé of the Report, adding our own comments where felt necessary.

General

Some of the expressions seem strangely worded, if, as intended, the Report is concerned with the whole membership of the two Churches. At times the language is rather "churchy": for instance we have "the holy Catholic Church"; "ghostly counsel"—why not "spiritual"?; and we wonder what many will make of the statement (on p. 30) that "baptism is a dominical sacrament"—could it not have been said as being "from the Lord"? There seems here to be a conscious endeavour by the Methodist representatives to speak in terms acceptable and well-pleasing to their Anglican brethren. Indeed, we sense this attitude throughout the Report, as though the Methodists have a feeling of inferiority complex when faced with Anglicans. So often in these Unity or Union conversations and meetings it is tacitly accepted that the Church of England leads and others are content to be recognised by her. A Nonconformist esteems it an honour to be invited to take part in a Church of England service, while feeling honoured himself if an Anglican has fellowship with him in any way. Very much like the attitude towards Anglicans as being "Church" and the rest of us simply "Chapel."

But on the whole the doctrinal statements are made clearly from scripture and could not be simpler in their meaning. It is when we come to the application of those scriptures that we find differences of view, tradition and, sometimes, confusion.

The Report outlines proposals for the coming together of the two Churches in two stages. The first stage would last for some years, the Churches entering into full communion **while retaining their distinct life and identity**. Those last words are an admission in themselves. Surely, the more the "life and identity" of the two bodies are maintained, the less desire or likelihood there will be for union. The second stage is the final goal for "union within one Church," it being realised that the existence side by side of two parallel Churches, in full communion, would be "anomalous and unsatisfactory."

Full communion would involve :

- (a) Reconciliation in a service, of which an outline is given, recognising by mutual laying-on of hands the existing ministries.
- (b) Acceptance by the Methodist Church of episcopacy (the historic system of bishops as insisted upon by the Church of England).
- (c) Means to co-operate and grow together by consultation, common action and devotion, during the period of full communion.

It is hoped to present the Report to the Convocations of the Church of England and to the Methodist Conference this year. The recommendations concern all members of the two churches, in every parish and circuit. By 1965 the central constitutional bodies may be ready to state whether they accept the proposals.

The Scriptures and Church Union

The Report agrees that "the Holy Scriptures are the inspired witness to the revelation of God, and constitute the supreme rule of faith." But "this does not mean that Christianity is the religion of a book, a collection of infallible oracles capable of use apart from the Church, or that it sets forth and provides a detailed plan upon which at all times the whole life of the Church must be strictly modelled." "Holy Scripture is . . . the supreme standard of faith and morals in the Church because it embodies the testimony of chosen witnesses to God's saving action. The Old Testament is the prophetic witness of God's people under the old covenant: the New Testament is the apostolic testimony entrusted to the Church under the new. The Church has not made up its gospel from its own experience, but has received it from witnesses, and the Holy Spirit assures us that their witness is true." These truths could not have been more clearly stated. Moreover, it is stressed that ordinances in both Churches are asked whether they believe that "the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity to eternal salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, and whether . . . they will . . . teach nothing as . . . to eternal salvation but that which they are persuaded may be concluded and proved by scripture." The question is based on Art. VI of the Anglican XXXIX Articles. Art. XX states "the Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written."

In the light of these statements where do the teachings and practices of both Churches stand as regards, for instance, baptism and the Lord's table? If the clear teaching of scripture were applied, without theological explanation or interference, we should not have the God-dishonouring confusion we see on these two vital and sublime and necessary ordinances of the Head of the church. These meaningful actions of faith and salvation, instead of binding God's people together, have been added to or taken from, with the result we see of traditions replacing the word of God.

We find this characteristic of the Report. Authority of scripture is stressed; statements are supported by scripture, but are cancelled out by traditional practices. Not only is this apparent in baptism and the Lord's supper, but in what is said concerning ministry and priesthood.

Gospel, Church Order and Ministry

Here again we have straightforward and clear affirmations: as that "The essential structure of the Church is divinely determined, since it is Christ's Church, not ours;" "The Holy Spirit will not contradict the mind and will of Christ as known to us through the New Testament"; "Development must be within and loyal to the 'given' (i.e. what God has appointed)"; "We have . . . to be faithful to such ordering . . . and to see that any development or addition to it is consistent with the 'given' and the gospel." But does practice of the two Churches adhere to these declarations? If so, why are they so far apart as to need six years' consultations before being able to issue even such a tentative report as this, which envisages thirty years before the recommendations can be fully carried out?

It is declared that "All Christian ministry is sharing in Christ's service to God, the Church and the world. All Christians are called to partake in it, through the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit. A 'professional' or separated ministry must never be a substitute for this." We are all absolutely agreed on this, but again, how does it work out in the two Churches? The very division into clergy and laity, practised by both, is a denial of their statement. What happens is that, especially in the Anglican and, to a less degree in the Methodist Church, when a "minister" (clergyman) is present, it would never be dreamt of to call upon a member of the "laity" to offer prayer or do any other such service. The teaching of the Churches on the ministry has brought about this state where ordinary members are almost helpless to do any such spiritual work. It is accepted as being the function of "ordained" men.

Concerning "priesthood" the Report says: (1) that the Lord Jesus Christ is priest alone, in His own right; (2) By sharing in His priestly ministry, the Church is a royal priesthood, a holy nation; (3) Every individual believer has his own privilege of direct, personal access to God in Christ. All scriptural, and therefore true. But then we come into the realm of history and tradition with the statement that "Within the realm of the corporate priesthood there fall to be performed certain actions, historically and generally regarded as priestly, which are in many Churches, including the Church of England, reserved to those who have been

specifically ordained, as ministers of the word and sacraments, to perform them. These include the celebration of the Holy Communion . . ." Almost every word of that can be controverted as begging the question. We could ask, what is ordination; who has the authority to ordain; and where is the scripture suggesting that any particular class of men alone has authority to carry out these services? Truly, as with many other issues raised, the Methodist Church is going to have to submit to a considerable extent before being welcomed as on equal ground with the Anglican; or the Church of England is going to have to yield many of its distinctive tenets before uniting with the Methodist. Really, the whole trouble is that neither Church is ready fully to accept the New Testament and that alone as its authority: neither body is going deeply enough into the issues. Until we get "back to the Bible; back to Jerusalem," hackneyed and old-fashioned and fundamentalist though these appeals sound, we shall never get down to the true foundation. The building may be imposing and grand, but it cannot stand unless built upon the "foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself the chief cornerstone."

This brings us naturally to the problem of Episcopacy. And it is a problem—perhaps the trickiest that the Committees had to tackle. The doctrine is full of contradictions and inconsistencies, and readiness to accept the idea that both views can be right, although diametrically opposed. The Report asks: "How are we to find the way by which (a) Orders such as Anglicans have inherited from the undivided Church may be given to those who have not previously received them; while (b) it is recognised that their ordinations have made Methodists true ministers of Christ's Word and Sacraments? Is acceptance of the historic episcopate a necessary condition?" There follows a statement setting out the essential nature of the bishop's office. It is shown that "the Book of Common Prayer rules that episcopal ordination is necessary for regular ministration in the Church of England." At the same time the Methodists made it clear that they cannot assent to anything which can be regarded as repudiating their "spiritual history." Do we see how, as in other places in the Report, human history and tradition are clung to, rather than being let go in the interests of unity, and above all in the light of New Testament authority, to which the Committees paid lip-service? Yet the Methodists are willing to appreciate the view of episcopacy held by the Anglicans, for they say, "Methodists will have no less freedom of interpretation than Anglicans now enjoy of the historic episcopate . . ." But how, on so vital and fundamental a matter, can one accept both views as right, agree with both? As the system of episcopacy is the very foundation of the Church of England, she cannot let it go. Denied by the Methodists as unscriptural and unwarranted, how can it be accepted?

This is another example of how, in following unproved tradition and teaching of uninspired men, the "mind is left bewildered in a dubious road." Once get away from the Divine authority of the New Testament and we build error upon error. The plain fact is that the whole doctrine of episcopacy is assumption. There is not a syllable in scripture to support it. The only apostolic succession we read of is the appointment of Matthias to fill the place of Judas. Seen in its setting, we understand the Divine authority for this appointment. Scripture was fulfilled and carried out, and God's blessing rested upon it all. But the Anglican doctrine of bishops receiving the Holy Spirit through the continuous laying-on of hands from the time of the apostles until now, and able to convey this gift through laying-on of hands, is neither scriptural nor historical. In the nature of the case there cannot be successors to the apostles. It is a false claim. The constant dispute between the episcopal Churches like the Roman Catholic and the Anglican is therefore seen to be a dispute over a fallacy. The talk about "validity of Orders" is meaningless. It is possible that, unthinkingly, many Methodists may tolerate these claims of the Church of England; but we cannot conceive that anyone can accept them who troubles to make the most cursory examination of scripture and other evidence for or against "apostolic succession."

[We purpose in future articles, God willing, to continue our examination of the Report, and to present the views of dissentient Methodists who took part in the Conversations. We feel we are justified in thus commenting in so much detail, for the issues raised are vital, especially to those who, like ourselves, regard the New Testament as the only possible ground for a firm foundation for the church of Jesus Christ.]

EDITOR.

Among many young people today there is a real groping after the essential things of Christianity, and a healthy scorn of the inessentials. One sixth-form boy said, "Our Church is just a

social club, I can go to one sort of entertainment or lecture every night in the week, but I don't think that's what the Church is for. There's nothing to challenge us or call out the best in us."

“Honest to God”

THE above is the title of a book written by J. A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich. I have not read it, but in it I understand the Bishop says, “Our image of God must be revolutionised.” “Our old image of God must go,” he says, “in the light of modern science—science of the largest telescopes and of the farthest probes of the rockets.” God, for him, he says, is mathematics! The Deity is “an order of regularity, imbued with an utterly personal love.” How “an order of regularity” has any personal love, completely and entirely escapes me. Mathematics, so far as I am able to understand, is the complete and accurate science of number and quantity in all their relations. We read of pure mathematics, which includes, arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, geometry, and how these are applied to the science of astronomy, dynamics, physics, etc.

I mention these things because I feel so strongly about them. We must face these modern attacks on our faith. We cannot ignore them. We must give an answer, both to ourselves and to anyone who may challenge the truth. “Honest to God!”

What is it to be honest to God?

Surely it means being honest with ourselves concerning the truth of God. Was the one who claimed to be the Son of God so utterly and completely mistaken and misled in His knowledge and understanding of God? If we accept such statements as put out by the Bishop of Woolwich, then we would have to accept that Jesus our Lord was mistaken. But He was not! For no-one could be the Son of Mathematics. No-one could be the son of “an ordered regularity,” no matter how well ordered and regular. Mathematics and “order of regularity,” are not persons, but things.

Jesus was the living Son of a living Person—the Person He called the Father, the One we call God—the Almighty.

To think seriously, concerning the wonderful Person whom God really is, let us start by thinking of the great contrast, if you like, the great gulf that is fixed between what the Bible reveals and says of God and what modern science tells us.

What does the Bible say of God?

First, that He is a Person of thought—a thinking Person. Isaiah quotes the very words of God (55:8): “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” said the Lord.

Moreover, He is a Person of *understanding*, an understanding Person. (1 Chron. 28; 9): “The Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the

imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off.” Then also He is a Person of *decision*. Job says of God (42:2): “No purpose of thine can be restrained.” Mathematics do not think, they do not search, they cannot understand nor do they decide.

Furthermore, the Bible tells us that God is a Person—with a *heart*. Both in the Books of Samuel (1 Sam. 13:14) and Acts (13:22) God speaks of a certain individual, a man, David, as a man after His own heart. Now, when we speak of the heart we think of the seat and source of life, the emotions and affections. Thus is God revealed, a Person, full of emotion and affection. Think of Him in the words of Zephaniah (3:17): “The Lord, thy God, is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save thee: He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”

In the Books of Chronicles (1 Chron. 29:17) and Proverbs (11:20) we read how God has pleasure in uprightness; “such as are perfect in their way, are his delight.” God also finds joy in our fear of Him, the Psalmist says (Ps. 147:11): “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him.” But not only does God find pleasure in our fear of him; the Psalmist hastens to add, in the very same verse, that “God rejoices also in those that hope in his mercy.”

Such is the nature and character of the Person of God that He can take pleasure and rejoice. He finds pleasure in our meekness, Psalm 149:11 says, “For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people, He will beautify the meek with salvation” (as in the margin) “with victory.”

He finds pleasure also in our prayers: “The prayer of the upright is his delight (Prov. 15:8). Repentance, too, for we are all familiar with the passage in Luke 15:7-10, which speaks of the “joy in the presence of God and the angels over one sinner that repenteth.” Lastly, there is another matter: “Without faith, it is impossible to be well pleasing unto God.” So we read in Heb. 11:6. But one whose faith was great, had witness borne to him, that he had been well-pleasing to God: that one was Enoch.

The Contrasts

Now, if it were possible (it is not), but if it were, to bring Enoch and the Bishop of Woolwich together, we would have the great contrast, represented by these two men. On the one hand, the man

of science; on the other, the man of God; and the contrast in all its stark naked reality is complete.

Mathematics, or God as a Person; which is it to be? Mathematics, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or God (the Person) the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Think of it. Mathematics, without thought, or word, or deed, or hope, or joy, or mercy, or pleasure. No! It is God, the Person, with heart and hope,

with thought and decision, with searching and rewarding with joy and singing, and above all with love—the love that gave His only begotten Son to be our Saviour; to beautify the meek with salvation; to give us victory over death and the grave. Can mathematics do this? Salvation comes from God's own heart. Therein lies the seat and the source of our life that is eternal. God, the ever-loving stands for ever, our old ideas of Him go on.

GEORGE BISHOP.

Signs of the Times

A few words extracted from a paragraph in the "S.S." April issue provide a connecting link between what has appeared under the above heading and this, its closing portion. The extract (abbreviated) is one of several questions, put by someone for his readers to ask themselves. It reads thus: "Have I come to understand that Christianity is . . . a philosophy of living . . . ?" The question implies that the gospel not only offers salvation to the true believer, its philosophy is also concerned with life as lived around us. It comprises not only our duty to God, but along with that, and part of it, our duty to our fellow creatures.

The incident related in each of the first three Gospels of the visit to Jesus of Herodians, with their "catchy" question: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" bears as directly—by implication—on us as it did upon those to whom the answer was spoken. The question began with the words, "Is it lawful," and two kinds of law are involved in the answer given, the law of God and the laws of men.

The psalmist says of the first: "The law of the Lord is perfect." That is, it is complete. Needing neither emendation nor addition: it "lives and abides for ever." It is to be received as written, interpretations of it being forbidden to anyone.

The laws of men, of nations, are different. They are not immutable, being subject to change. Yet, be it noted, the answer given by Jesus to those questioners, and the teaching enunciated by Paul and by Peter in their letters, are as imperative for obedience to man-made law as to the law of God. The answer given by Jesus to the Herodians reads, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." The affirmations of the apostles are: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God" (Paul); "Subject yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake . . . as servants of God" (Peter).

It is not easy to see how the Christian can "include himself out" of the obligations those words lay upon every one of us, and, as man-made law is inevitably imperfect, it is difficult to see how we can excuse ourselves of responsibility for the improvement of such laws we have as from time to time call for amendment. Would not changes which make laws more just be an effective way of doing good to all men? To relieve the hungry and destitute is manifestly what we should try to do, but to remove causes which bring those evils on mankind is surely a far better thing.

The enactment of human law is usually—if not always—by compromise. What is meant by compromise? One dictionary gives the word several definitions; here are its first three: arbitration; settlement of differences by mutual concession; partial waiving of theories or principles for the sake of settlement. I believe there are scriptures which go to show Divine approval of such a procedure in human relations. How shall we understand the saying of Jesus which reads: "Agree with thine adversary whilst thou art in the way with him?" How can two people or two or more parties agree, who are adverse to each other? They can use some form of arbitration, or waive or concede to one another some of those things which divide them, and in that way secure a form of agreement. That, the Lord implies, is what should be sought to be done. That is compromise.

In the parable of labourers in the vineyard, we read, "when he the householder had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard." When trouble came at the end of the day, he made that agreement (good or bad) the basis of his denial of their grievance. The man's actions, in fixing by agreement a wage for the day and in paying those who made less hours the same wage, are in accordance with the righteousness of the Kingdom of God, as the beginning of the

parable implies. Those who stood idle for part of the day and yet got a full day's pay profited from those who worked full time, which the householder insisted "was right." A lesson in present day economics!

A third illustration: "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened." Anyone who has seen a large pancheon partly filled with flour in which leaven has been hid, and watched that flour slowly rise up within the vessel until—in a remarkably short space of time—the dough (which combined meal and leaven has become)—reaches the high top of the pancheon, and hangs festooned down the outside of it, has been something to wonder at. That is a picture drawn out of the past: my mother making the week's batch of bread for a family of seven. I learned then from her that the secret is in the leaven. Its quality and its condition were her first concern. She would look closely at it, touch it, pour over it warm water, "so as not to scald it" and then—after a short spell on the hob—by its action, she would decide whether or not the leaven was good enough for its purpose.

It was for a time my pleasure to sit on various occasions under a man who knew a lot more about many things than I did. He once spoke to us about leaven, and of someone who had discovered that yeast was a compact mass of minute life, which, when mixed with meal under the right conditions, would permeate and appropriate it until its composition and texture were completely changed. Baked, it gave us bread as we know it. That analysis of leaven, if true gives us a wonderful picture of the vitality expected of the church (which is the Kingdom of God); or even if not true—and leaven works by chemical action—the picture the Lord gives remains the same: a revelation of intense power, silently and mysteriously operating, to obtain desired results: the cultivation within society of the wisdom and righteousness of God, until the whole is "leavened."

Obviously, that parable is not concerned with the salvation of the individual. Contrast its teaching with another saying of Jesus: "Strait is the gate, and narrow the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." A doctrine which confines life to a narrow way, that few can find, cannot have the same purpose as one which is so expansive as to cover a whole community, leaving none outside of its blessings.

The parable illustrates the reality of that for which we contend, that the philosophy of Christianity has its wider aspects, where the influence of the church—the Kingdom of God on earth—by the proclamation and exercise of its principles of loving-kindness and righteousness—should lead men to seek and work for the good of all.

This article began with a quotation from a previous "S.S.", it may well end with another which appeared some months ago, an extract from the preface to Butler's "Two Sermons on Human Nature": "It is true that all men, as moral and responsible agents, are required to face all the moral facts of life, and to seek, by every effort of mind and soul, to solve the moral problems which present themselves on every hand. Ignorance of facts which is produced by ignoring them, incapacity to solve problems which is begotten by unwillingness to face them, are moral faults, and tend to lower the moral tone of a community."

W. BARKER.

Keep Sweet

WHEN the day is dragging, dragging,

And your heart is sorely tried,

When your work is sadly lagging,

And ambition's end denied

Keep sweet.

Hold your faith to constant hoping,

Never doubt, amid your groping,

Keep sweet

When your enemies assail you,

And your character impugn,

When your courage seems to fall you

And your voice is out of tune,

Keep sweet.

Hold your hope to constant winging,

Never let your soul cease singing,

Keep sweet.

When you lose your friend's approval

And the world grows dark and grim,

And the sunshine's drear removal

Makes your morning sad and dim,

Keep sweet

Hold your heart to constant cheering

You can conquer naught by fearing,

Keep sweet.

'Tis the glow of all creation

Shines through those of hopeful heart,

And you will take a lofty station

By performing well your part,

Keep sweet.

Thus you'll make a dark world brighter

You will make its burdens lighter,

Keep sweet.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FOR MAY, 1963

5—Jeremiah 38:1-20	Acts 5:17-42
12—2 Chron. 24:1-3 & 15-25	Acts 6
19—Exodus 2:1-22	Acts 7:1-29
26—Exodus 2:23 to 3:12	Acts 7:30-60

"THY MARTYR STEPHEN"

(Acts 22:20)

MEN of special strength of character come to the fore in times of crisis. So in the church Stephen rose to eminence through the difficulty of providing fairly for widows who needed help. We can see how this came about because some of the Jews in Jerusalem when the gospel was first preached were born in other countries where Greek was spoken, or may even have been proselytes converted to the Jewish faith from heathenism; whereas others were natives and spoke their own tongue. The apostles realised, we do not know how quickly, that their precious time was being absorbed in relief of physical needs—very important, but much less important than spiritual. How wisely under divine guidance they handled the matter! They must teach and preach, but the charitable work must continue—and must be done well.

"Pick out therefore," they said, "seven men to do it." They stated the qualifications, left the selection to the members of the church, and made the appointment by the laying-on of hands, thus conveying miraculous powers to the seven. The two we read of again certainly exercised these powers (see 6:8 and 8:6 & 7). We wish to consider Stephen's character and his work.

It was essential that these men should be well thought of by all who knew them. They were known to be thoroughly upright and trustworthy because they were handling funds. Every one of them had a good reputation for these characteristics. They had manifested them in all their doings. It was no "hit or miss" choice; they had proved themselves in the sight of all. We can be mistaken in our judgment, but shady words and actions soon show themselves. Each one must also have spiritual insight—be spiritually minded. We know worldly-minded folk by their talk and their walk. They are much more concerned with the world than with God and the church.

"Let your conversation be such as becometh saints—holy consecrated people." Are you and I living up to that, or do we spend more time with our daily papers than with the Bible? The special duties required, their first consideration, not just spare time, even if they all

worked for their living. We can perhaps use our imagination here to view the continuous visiting of the poorer members by the "deacons" (for we may well call them by that name). They would be searching out the needy, considering what they could do to help them most, using the fund wisely if generously, and avoiding what would be so easy—treating some more favourably than others. Their kind and loving ministrations would so impress both the church and those outside that they thus contributed to that upward surge of numbers and spiritual power (6:7) which followed their appointment. How long they continued in this work we are not told. The fact that priests, who depended on their Temple services for their living, became obedient to the faith, indicates great progress.

We failed to note the remaining qualification—"wisdom." Its possession is self-evident in such distribution.

As Stephen prosecuted these humble services to his brethren and sisters, he made frequent contact with all sorts and conditions of men, and developed the gifts he already possessed in talking the truth. Brought into contact with sickness and troubles of all kinds he was able to work signs and wonders and became a prominent public figure, like the apostles before him, and came up against similar opposition, but from those, doubtless, with whom he had previously worshipped. The names of the seven are of Greek origin, and we can be sure that Stephen was a godly Jew before he became a Christian, and would be a frequent worshipper with the Grecian Jews, who now became his chief opponents. In this he was a forerunner of Saul of Tarsus. Those to whom he was nearest in his discarded beliefs are bitterest in their enmity.

Stephen's works were works of mercy and goodness, but this, as in the case of the Saviour Himself, failed to reduce hostility and unbelief. Blind prejudice heeds no evidence, but Stephen's wisdom in debate, and his calm and unprovocative manner, only enraged them the more. Failing in argument, they excited the people by rousing them to fury against Stephen by picturing him as belittling the Temple and the Law. So sensitive were the Jews on these points that it was the easiest thing to blacken any person's character by attributing disrespect of these sacred objects to him. Again as in the case of Jesus, it seems strange that people who had witnessed so recently the most astonishing works of love and goodwill, should either stand aside from, or actually participate in violence against the doers of them. Is this just an illustration of human fickleness—or of sinfulness?

Stephen's speech was not a defence. It was a reasoned and sustained attack,

first upon the wicked past of the Jewish nation; then upon their false and even idolatrous veneration for the Temple; and finally upon their murderous action against God in betraying and murdering His Son. The rejection of Joseph and then of Moses, and finally of God Himself by the nation before it was taken into Babylon (7:43) filled the first point. The temporary character of the Tabernacle and Solomon's admission that God cannot be confined to a human building made the second.

We assume that Stephen, filled with the Spirit of God, spoke the truth with a consciousness of the inevitable result, his death. God sustained him in this, and granted the vision of the heavenly reality. How supremely gracious are his final words—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" Jesus said once to the Jews: "Ye are of your Father, the devil." This is evidenced in the uncontrolled rage of those who put Stephen to death. The Saviour said: "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do." This should be the spirit animating all Christians.

R. B. SCOTT.

Who Will Help?

READERS of the "Scripture Standard" have read of events affecting brethren in Wende Wende, Nyasaland, and many have responded to the needs. In a recent issue of the magazine, when thanking disciples in Britain for their help, Brother E. C. Severe said that two brothers would like to come here to be helped to serve the Lord more efficiently in Africa.

For years we have had repeated appeals from brethren in various African countries (Nyasaland particularly), often in words identical to those which summoned Paul to Macedonia, "Come over . . . and help us." The appeal (to our shame) has fallen on deaf ears. Nobody is willing to go.

Brother Severe's present suggestion ought not to be ignored. If we can assist faithful men to become good workmen for the Lord, and send them back to do a greater work for Him, we shall be doing something of lasting value for the Kingdom of God.

For these reasons the church which meets at 5 Mount Ephraim Road, Tunbridge Wells, has decided to try to bring these two brothers to Britain for a period of two years. Already members here

have guaranteed them food and lodging for their stay in this country. The men recommended are:—

(1) **Brother Cylice Boirman.** Aged 30: he has been a member of the church since 1958, and is a preacher of the gospel. (2) **Brother Beneth Chimanga.** He is aged 27 and has been a Christian since 1949. He too is a preacher of the gospel. Both men are highly commended by the church in Wende Wende.

We in Tunbridge Wells are a small church, with large commitments of our own. But we believe this is a good work which God will approve. We understand that the single fare from Nyasaland to Britain for one man is about £90. So it will cost about £180 to bring these men here. It would seem wise, moreover, to have cost of return journey covered before they are brought. We are therefore making this appeal in the hope that there will be enough concerned ones among us to promise what is needed. Do you care? Would you be willing to help? If so, write and tell us what you would give. We have talked much of the need to do something to assist the brethren in Africa. Now is the time to act. Who will help? A. E. Winstanley, 43a Church Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Truth Versus Prejudice

If you develop a passion for truth you will soon discover that its chief enemy is not ignorance but prejudice. Ignorance can be taught; prejudice is incapable of learning.

Prejudice is a kind of mental derangement, a loss of ability to function normally. The mind of the prejudiced is permanently warped and closed against truth. He is the blind who will not see. He acquired an opinion in childhood or youth, and he cannot see or hear any truth that will disturb it.

You may say, "He is entitled to his opinion, and I will be broadminded and tolerant, and neither say nor do anything that will offend him." That might work if he would do the same, but he will not. He will take advantage of your moral cowardice and weakness and will work all the harder to force his opinion and prejudice upon others.

Untruth and prejudice will rule the world, if truth keeps silence.



(Conducted by
A. E. Winstanley,
43a Church Road,
Tunbridge Wells,
Kent).

TALKING TO TEENAGERS

A ROW IN THE KIRK!

A ROW in the Kirk? What about? Well, in the "Sunday Post" of January 13th, 1963 there was this headline: "There's a Row Brewing in the Kirk over Baptism." The article under it began with these words:—

"A row over baptism is brewing in the Church of Scotland.

"A controversial issue will come up at the General Assembly this year for approval.

"Some ministers are all in favour. Others are dead against."

What's it all about?

Why should baptism cause such serious controversy in the denomination mentioned? The article speaks of a "proposal" which contains these words: "Without the consent of the presbytery, no minister shall administer baptism if another minister has, for good and sufficient reasons shown, refused baptism." What is this "baptism" about which the contention rages? The article continues: "... if the minister down the road refuses to christen a baby because the mother and father aren't Kirk members or don't worship regularly, or for any other reason he considers sufficient, no other minister will be allowed to christen the child, unless he gets special permission from the presbytery."

So the row is about "baby baptism." Some preachers of the religious body concerned say any baby may be "baptised" or "christened." Others say "baptism" should not be administered if, for instance, the parents are not "members of the Kirk."

Should Babies be Baptised?

Anybody who believes the Bible to be God's Word believes that Jesus commanded baptism. But for whom? Was it for babies? On a number of occasions Christians have advertised that a large reward would be given to any person who would show from the New Testament (1) that Jesus commanded the baptism of babies, or (2) that the apostles and first-century disciples practised baby baptism. I have never heard of anyone claiming the reward. Have you?

Who should be Baptised?

After telling the apostles to preach the gospel in all the world, Jesus continued: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). So before any person may be baptised he must believe, or trust in Jesus as Saviour. But that's not all. The apostle Peter said to believers, "Repent and be baptised every one of you . . . for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

So there's no place in the Lord's plan for the baptism of babies. They cannot repent. They are not sinners. But for those able to trust completely in Jesus, to see sin as the horrible thing it really is, and who decide to change their way of living (all this is tied up with repentance) baptism is

A new Life begun

Read these words carefully: "We, who have died to sin—how could we live in sin a moment longer? Have you forgotten that all of us who were baptised into Jesus Christ were, by that very action, sharing in his death? We were dead and buried with him in baptism, so that just as he was raised from the dead by that splendid revelation of the Father's power, so we too might arise on a new plane altogether. If we have, as it were, shared his death, *let us rise and live our new lives with him!*" (Romans 6:2-5, J. B. Phillips: New Testament in Modern English).

Young Christian, when you were immersed you were giving yourself completely to Jesus, making him Lord of your life. You were saying: "From now on you will come first in my life. I will strive to live as you desire. I will make it the great aim of my life to be like you."

Young friend, you who read this and who have not yet begun this wonderful adventure of living for and with Jesus, a word for you, too. The Son of God offers you life, a new life, full, purposeful and satisfying. He can make your living count for God. He said, "I am come that they might have life . . . more

abundantly." Begin to follow Jesus.
Begin to live!

FOR THE LITTLE ONES

Who gives us our food? And the sun, air and rain? Yes, God. Every good gift comes from Him. Shall we remember then to thank Him every time we eat a meal? It helps sometimes to say "thanks" to God in a verse. Here's a well-known one: "Thank you for the earth so sweet. Thank you for the food we eat. Thank you for the birds that sing. Thank you God, for everything. Amen."

Best wishes from,

UNCLE ALBERT

Slamannan District Churches of Christ

CO-OPERATION FOR EVANGELISTIC PURPOSES

CODE OF PRACTICE

1. Main object as Churches of Christ in the SLAMANNAN DISTRICT (the name covering the local assemblies in the area) is to EVANGELISE by employing full-time gospel preacher or preachers.

2. Co-operate together as Churches of Christ in the above district to this end, thereby using the liberty given by God for His glory and the extension of His Kingdom—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel").

3. Co-operate simply to ensure that the small assemblies who cannot employ an evangelist as they desire, because of expense involved, can together do so.

4. Contribute to a common fund to employ an evangelist (full-time gospel preacher) or evangelists.

5. Money is sent direct to the brother acting as treasurer, who pays evangelist direct from the common fund, the salary having been agreed by the churches.

6. The local assemblies who co-operate are not a society of churches but simply Churches of Christ.

7. The co-operation formed has and seeks no power or authority, but only the good of all local assemblies, to be able to evangelise by providing the means to this end.

8. The co-operation has no jurisdiction over each local assembly, which retains freedom of carrying out its own evangelising in conjunction with evangelist(s).

9. Each local assembly desiring evangelist's services consults with and instructs evangelist as it desires its effort, or mission, to be conducted.

10. Evangelist is never under instruction of churches, but always under local assembly with whom he serves. No interference whatsoever by any outside the local assembly, unless such is requested.

11. The local assemblies meet at agreed times (1st Saturday in March and September) to confer only on suiting each other's needs in evangelising and to make such arrangements as are necessary.

12. Each local assembly is represented at such meetings by whomsoever they choose and instruct.

13. Co-operate in every way by social, mutual benefit or other means, arranged as desired by the churches.

14. Funds used for various means of evangelising, either by preaching, get-together meetings, and all other means available to the churches.

15. A brother is asked to offer his services to take care of all correspondence for the churches. This brother is one selected unanimously by the church and is appointed yearly. Service rendered is freely given and such a brother has no authority other than attending to correspondence.

16. As in (15) above, a brother offers his services to take care of money accrued and has no authority otherwise.

17. As in (15) and (16), a brother offers his services in auditing of books kept by brother taking care of money accrued—no authority otherwise.

18. Each meeting of the churches in the district for evangelistic purposes is minuted and kept on record to ensure that all is "done decently and in order" and for the good of the Churches.

19. Reports from each local assembly as to progress etc., are welcomed at each meeting.

20. New ideas and helpful suggestions from all members to give greater effort in evangelising are welcomed and given every consideration.

Influence of Israelite Nation

The two small Semitic nations, the Phoenicians and the Israelites, have had a more profound influence on western civilisation than all the civilisations that preceded them. The first has given the basic forms for all the languages of Europe and Central Asia; while the latter, through their Scriptures, formed the basis of all religions in Europe. (T. Thompson: "ABC of our Alphabet").

Plan as if you were going to live for ever; act as if you were going to die tomorrow.

Honour is not a matter of any man's calling merely, but rather of his own actions in it.—Dwight.

We will sit nights by the bedside of the man who is losing his health, and not have time to talk to the man that's losing his soul.

If there be a paradise for virtues, there must be a hell for crimes.

Rich will be the man who bales the grass growing under other people's feet.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Bedminster, Bristol.—On Lord's Day, 24th March, 1963, we witnessed the good confession, followed by the immersion of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Baker. They have been earnest seekers after the truth for some time, and with the added encouragement of Bro. Tom Nisbet, were finally persuaded.

Bro. Nisbet has laboured with us during March, and has succeeded in getting a number interested. He has encouraged the church with his messages, and we pray that the good seed sown will produce fruit in God's good time. We look forward to Bro. Nisbet's return to us for two weeks after his mission at Devonport. A.L.D.

Kentish Town.—We rejoice to report the baptism on Lord's Day morning, March 24th of Miss Esther Russell. May our young sister grow in grace and the knowledge of our Saviour and so be blessed and be a blessing.

Wallacestone.—It is with joy the church here records that on February 18th, we again witnessed the power of the gospel. After Bro. D. Dougall had preached a stirring message on baptism, Bro. John Baird baptised a man in his middle years, David Hamilton. He also immersed his own daughter Joan, a maid of 13 years. It was especially a joyful night for the Baird household, for this means that the whole family are now in the Lord. It is also encouraging to the church so soon after losing two of its members. James Grant.

Thanks

A receipt has been received, signed by four Nyasaland brethren, for £5 sent by an anonymous giver to assist those who suffered in the accident to their meeting-house.

Correction

April issue, P. 44: Heading "Officers Of The Church" should read "Offices In The Church."

OBITUARY

Wigan, Albert Street.—It is with deep regret that we have to report the sudden passing away of Bro. Henry Winstanley, on March 21st aged 78. He had been a member for many years and, since returning from Canada, a cheerful and loyal servant. He leaves behind two sons and two daughters. We commend them to the care of our heavenly Father. Bro. Winstanley was laid to rest on March 27th. W.S.

Blackburn, Hamilton Street.—It is with sorrow we report the passing suddenly on March 31st at the age of 79 years of our sister Harrison, better known as Zilpah. She was a faithful attendant at the Lord's Table and other services for 25 years, and will be much missed. She was voluntary organiser and treasurer of the Sunshine Band for visitation of the sick and needy inside and outside the Church, which did much good and was greatly appreciated.

Twenty-five years ago she and her father fell on evil days having no home of their own. Bro. and Sister Harry Wilson were contacted, since when our sister has been one of the household. She now rests from her labours, but her work follows after her.

Brother John Pritt officiated at the meeting house and crematorium. H.W.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST HOLIDAY FELLOWSHIP

To be held, D.V., from July 20th to August 2nd, 1963.

Place: Duncan Hall School, Scratby—five miles north of Great Yarmouth, on the coast.

Accommodation: Dormitories only—no private rooms available. Bookings will be limited to eighty persons.

Charges: Adults £5 per week. Children (under 14 years) £3 per week. Bookings will be accepted for only one or two weeks—no shorter periods.

Bookings: No bookings will be accepted without a deposit—one pound per adult, ten shillings for each child, regardless of period.

Subjects: A special feature of this holiday fellowship will be a series of discussion groups for young people. Young brethren at Bangor last year suggested the following subjects: (1) The Importance of Dress; (2) Dating and Courtship; (3) What to do with your spare time; (4) Attitude to Older People; (5) How to attract young people to the Lord; (6) A Christian's attitude in his own home.

Information and bookings: Write to A. E. Winstanley, 43a Church Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Midland Churches of Christ

GOSPEL CAMPAIGN: May 18th to May 22nd.

Conducted by P. C. SLATE (Wembley)

Meetings as follows:—

Saturday, May 18th: Ilkeston Town Hall, at 6.30 p.m.

Sunday, May 19th: Church of Christ, Burns Street, Ilkeston, at 8 p.m.

Monday, May 20th: Church of Christ, Oxford Street, Loughborough, at 7.30.

Tuesday, May 21st: Church of Christ, Seymour Road, Eastwood, at 7.30.

Wednesday, May 22nd: Church of Christ, Benlah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, 7.30.

Hospitality, write to F. Gregory, "Glen Dower," 204 Heanor Road, Ilkeston, Derby.

Blackburn: Hamilton Street. Preliminary Notice. We contemplate holding a mission during May, with Brother Tom Nisbet as missionary. We look for the wholehearted support and encouragement you have given us in the past. We should be glad if each assembly will let us know in good time how many we may expect to come. Particulars later. H. Wilson, 10 Hollin Bridge Street, Blackburn.

Hindley: Mission: Monday, May 27th to Monday, June 3rd, each night, 7.30 p.m. Speaker, Bro. A. E. Winstanley (Tunbridge Wells).

Hindley: Bible School Weekend, Saturday, June 1st to Monday, June 3rd, 1963. Saturday afternoon at 3. Devotional. Lord's Day Prayer Meeting 8 a.m.; Breaking of Bread 10.15 a.m.; Bible School 2 p.m.; Open Air 3 p.m.;

Questions Answered 6 p.m.; Gospel 7.30 p.m.

Monday: Prayer Meeting 8 a.m.; Forum 10.30 a.m. to 12 noon. Subject: "Our strength and our weakness, as churches of Christ, pleading for a complete return to Christianity, as taught by Christ and His Apostles."

Lunch, 12.30 p.m.

"Questions Answered," 2.30 to 3.15 p.m.; Open Forum 3.15 to 4 p.m.

Tea, 4.30 p.m. Gospel, 7.30 p.m.

Write for hospitality to T. Kemp, 52 Argyle Street, Hindley.

Edinburgh, Hyvots Bank.—Gospel Campaign. June 9th to 30th. Preacher, Bro. G. W. Bailey, Abilene, U.S.A. In charge of personal work, Bro. Ivan Stewart, Albuquerque, New Mexico. A working group of 35-40 brethren will come from U.S.A. We invite brethren to come and join us in this great effort to preach the Word. Brethren coming to work with us from other parts of U.K. will be provided as far as possible with hospitality in the homes of the brethren. Please write beforehand to Bro. George Gardiner, 15-2 Burnhead Grove, Edinburgh 9. Services will be held each evening except Fridays at 7.30 p.m. Andrew Gardiner.

A Tract

"TWENTY QUESTIONS"

Prices for Quantities:—

250	15/9	750	42/6
500	29/-	1,000	55/6

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EVANGELIST FUND: Contributions to R. McDONALD, "Aldersyde," 10 Mardale Road, Bennett Lane, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Secretary of Conference Committee: A. HOOD, 45 Park Road, Hindley, nr. Wigan.

NYASALAND Mission: Contributions to W. STEELE, 31 Niddrie Road, Portobello, Edinburgh, Mid Lothian.

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